



Rainbow Stories

Margaret Naughton, Healthcare Chaplain, reflects on the powerful effect rainbows have on her and their connection to the stories of joy and sorrow that are part of her everyday work.

My little niece Charlotte recently exclaimed that she loves rainbows. At three, she is amazingly curious, always ready to investigate or evaluate a new adventure. I must say I was thrilled to hear her interest in the rainbow beautifully arched across the sky. In truth, I have always been drawn to rainbows myself. I feel a tingle of warmth and joy each time I see one. In some way or another, it raises my spirits, connects me with the majesty of this world and reminds me that God is very close at hand.

After hearing the joy of Charlotte, I found myself reflecting on my own interest in rainbows. After all, I am not very creative. Yet, rainbows always draw me in. They stop my breath without explanation or reason. They make me pause, often within the context of a very busy day, immediately and overwhelmingly halting whatever I am doing. They teach me in a very tangible way to seize the moment.

I think my interest in rainbows echoes my interest in people. As a healthcare chaplain, I listen to people's stories. Every day I hear stories,



© gabrie12/Shutterstock

experiences of life, of love, of loss, of pain. I sit with those who are pained, broken, trying to re-integrate their new reality into their old one, those striving to make sense of the craziness of life. A place of pain, but a privileged one nonetheless.

The variety of stories, of experiences, of challenges, of joys and of sorrows all mingle to craft a reflection of life and of living. Sewn together, they offer insight into the people of God, to each of the beloved children known intimately by God even before they were formed in their mother's womb as the prophet Jeremiah tells us. Here I sit at the crossroads of life and death, hope and hopelessness, joy and sorrow.

There are moments that take my



Rainbow over Killarney Lakes

breathe away. The immediacy of the pain or the impact of the sharing so deep that I get cut to the heart. I find my heart and soul triggered by the story just shared, the tear just shed, the moment of silence needed without seeking.

The rainbow does the same to my inner being. It taps into my deepest and darkest places. Its colour and beauty best seen in the wettest of days. Its majesty a by-product of rain and cloud. So too do the people I meet at their darkest or most painful moments become the *Imago Dei*. At the time of crisis and pain, their greatest beauty comes to the fore. The strength within the struggle, the pain within the attempt to be strong, the silence within a noisy space all

echoing a deep-seated reflection of the creator God.

Our pain can make us beautiful just as much as our wholeness does. Our tears give us strength just as much as our laughter. Our frown shows as much about us as our smile. Our time of sorrow offers a glimpse of who we are just as much as our moment of laughter and happiness does. The rainbow reminds me every time I see it that there is wholeness to be found within the shattered fragments of our lives. In the colour of the rainbow is a reminder that we are a multiplicity of good days and bad but that no matter what, we are beloved children of God, known and loved by him, whatever we do, wherever we are, however dark the sky becomes. ♡